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Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Emergency assistance to the Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 52/169 F of 16 December 1997 on emergency assistance to the Sudan, the General Assembly, *inter alia*, noting the declining contributions to the 1997 United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for Operation Lifeline Sudan despite progress made in the Operation, and noting also that considerable relief needs still remained to be addressed, in particular in the areas of non-food assistance, acknowledged with appreciation the cooperation by the Government of the Sudan with the United Nations and encouraged that cooperation. The Assembly stressed the need for Operation Lifeline Sudan to be operated with a view to ensuring its efficiency, transparency and effectiveness, with the full participation of the Government of the Sudan in its management and operation. The Assembly took note of and was encouraged by the signing in April 1997 of the Peace Agreement between the Government of the Sudan and many factions of the rebel movement for the achievement of peace in the Sudan as well as by the joint announcement by the Government and the remaining faction of the rebel movement that they were engaged in peace talks. The Assembly stressed also the importance of assuring safe access for personnel providing relief assistance to all in need, and the importance of strict observance of the principles and guidelines of Operation Lifeline Sudan. In that connection, the Assembly urged all parties involved to continue to offer all feasible assistance, including facilitating the movement of relief supplies and personnel, so as to guarantee maximum success of Operation Lifeline Sudan in all affected parts of the country.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to mobilize and coordinate resources and support for Operation Lifeline Sudan and to report on the emergency situation in the affected areas and on the recovery, rehabilitation and development of the country to the Assembly at its fifty-third session. The present report has been prepared in response to that request and covers the period from October 1997 to July 1998.

II. Current situation in the Sudan

3. The combination of a two-year drought, erratic rainfall and intensified conflict produced the Sudan's most serious humanitarian crisis in a decade. During the first two quarters of 1998, with pre-famine conditions developing into famine, hundreds of thousands of Sudanese civilians crossed the threshold from subsistence to starvation. By the end of the reporting period, an estimated 2.6 million people required emergency food assistance. Of these, the majority were women and children. Although United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had launched the largest humanitarian operation in the history of Operation Lifeline Sudan, questions remained regarding the time it would take to stabilize the situation and whether sufficient financial resources could be mobilized to sustain life-saving interventions.

4. The outbreak of renewed hostilities in January 1998 was the catalyst for the crisis. Despite calls from members of the international community for a ceasefire, fighting among the parties continued throughout the first half of 1998, particularly in northern Bahr Al Ghazal, Blue Nile State and along the Eritrean border in Gederaf and Kassala states. While efforts to find peaceful solutions to the ongoing civil conflict in the Sudan gained momentum during two rounds of negotiations under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), no ceasefire had been agreed to by the end of June 1998.

5. Although United Nations agencies had warned during the last reporting period, and again in November 1997 in the Operation Lifeline Sudan annual needs assessments, that the onset of a life-threatening, uncontrollable humanitarian disaster was likely, donor contributions were so low during 1997 that several programme interventions were either curtailed or stopped and pre-positioning of key commodities including food stocks in the forward staging base of Lokichokio was difficult.

6. The reduced capacity of Operation Lifeline Sudan was disappointing in the light of significant improvements granted in access by the Government of the Sudan in the period from July 1997 to January 1998. Beginning in July 1997, after the first mission of the new Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs to the Sudan, Robert van Schaik, the number of access denials declined significantly. The average monthly flight denials by the Government of the Sudan dropped from 17 per month to 7 and all requests for barges were approved. This pattern continued until January 1998 when Kerubino Kwanyin Bol defected to the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and attacks were launched against the Government-controlled towns of Wau, Aweil and Gogrial in Bahr Al Ghazal.

7. The Government responded to these attacks by imposing a total flight ban over the entire region of Bahr Al Ghazal. The ban paralysed virtually all relief operations in this isolated area which is generally accessible only by air. After numerous high-level interventions by United Nations agencies, the ban was partially lifted in late February 1998

when six locations were cleared during an emergency mission by the Special Envoy and again in mid-March when two further locations were approved. In its efforts to lift the ban, the United Nations was strongly supported by a number of Member States. When full access was finally granted on 30 March, it was estimated that more than 350,000 persons in rebel-controlled areas of Bahr Al Ghazal and 30,000 in Government-controlled areas were suffering from serious hunger. By the end of May, this number had been revised upwards to 595,000 in rebel-held areas and 33,000 in Government-controlled areas. By mid-July, after comprehensive assessments, including nutritional and food economy surveys, had been conducted, the number of people in need of food assistance in rebel-held areas had climbed to 701,000 and in Government-controlled areas to approximately 78,000. Nutritional surveys showed that global malnutrition rates had risen to as high as 62 per cent in certain areas of Bahr Al Ghazal.

8. The increase in beneficiaries was attributable in large part to the continual breakdown of community structures and individual coping mechanisms which had begun before the flight ban and which accelerated subsequently owing to the stress on resources created by the displacement of more than 110,000 persons from Government-controlled areas of Bahr Al Ghazal following the January 1998 attack. Communities which had been barely able to cope prior to the ban crossed the threshold into food deficit as they shared their meagre resources with newly displaced. Compounding the problem was an erosion of community resilience after more than four years of military campaigns which had left communities bereft of assets, without shelter and unable to cultivate food crops.

9. Once access was granted, the Organization's early response was hampered by logistical constraints and lack of food. Although the World Food Programme (WFP) took immediate steps to divert food stocks from regional depots and requested a second C-130 aircraft which was approved within one week by the Government, it was not until early May 1998 that the magnitude of humanitarian need could be confirmed through rapid assessments. Government approval in early May of WFP requests for five C-130 heavy-cargo aircraft and three Buffalo planes ensured that the United Nations agencies had sufficient logistical capacity to intervene in Bahr Al Ghazal on the scale needed to begin to stabilize the situation.

10. United Nations agencies quickly realized, however, that the Operation Lifeline Sudan forward staging base in Lokichokio was too small to support the heavy-cargo aircraft required to mount a full-scale operation into southern Sudan. During a mission by the Assistant Emergency Relief Coordinator (Designate) of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Operation Lifeline Sudan agreed to open a second logistics base in the Government-controlled town of Al Obeid located north of the transitional zone. On 6 June 1998, the base became operational with one C-130 airdropping food into northern Bahr Al Ghazal. By the end of June, after further reassessments, WFP confirmed that 13 cargo aircraft would be required to meet urgent needs in southern Sudan until the end of the hunger gap in October. Government approval for the full WFP fleet was granted in early July. United Nations efforts to meet the crisis were bolstered in early June with the resumption of humanitarian activities by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which had suspended operations in the Sudan in November 1996 following a hostage-taking incident in Bahr Al Ghazal.

11. Although the humanitarian situation in Bahr Al Ghazal was on a scale unseen in southern Sudan for more than a decade, other areas of the South and the transitional zone also experienced pre-famine conditions during the first half of 1998. In virtually all cases, the decline in humanitarian conditions was linked to military action. Some of the highest malnutrition rates ever recorded by Operation Lifeline Sudan were reported in Government-controlled areas of Unity State including Bentiu and Rubkona. Malnutrition rates were also very high in rebel-held areas of western Upper Nile where constant insecurity prevented a full engagement by Operation Lifeline Sudan. In the Government-controlled towns of Torit and Terekeka in eastern Equatoria, global malnutrition rates topped 30 per cent. In the rebel-held areas of the Lopit mountains and pockets in Juba county, conditions similar to those found in Bahr Al Ghazal were reported.

12. In the transitional zone, Meiram and Abyei received influxes of internally displaced persons (IDPs) fleeing insecurity in Bahr Al Ghazal. Tensions also erupted after the attack on Wau between the Reizegat and Dinka tribes in the Ad Daein displaced camps, forcing thousands of IDPs to flee their camps. In Kassala, more than 20,000 IDPs fled from the front line seeking safe haven and emergency assistance.

13. Insecurity continued to hamper relief operations throughout the reporting period. In the most serious incident affecting humanitarian personnel, two WFP staff and one Sudanese Red Crescent Society worker were shot and killed during an ambush following a food distribution in Government-held areas of the Nuba mountains on 9 June. Two staff from the Sudanese Red Crescent Society were also injured during the attack. The United Nations denounced the killings and called upon all parties to allow safe passage for humanitarian personnel. In the 11-month period between

August 1997 and June 1998, over 200 relief personnel were evacuated from 37 locations. Raiding by militia and regular troops intensified after the January 1998 attacks, forcing thousands of internally displaced civilians to seek safe haven. Indiscriminate bombing by the Government in areas inhabited by civilian populations, including those concentrated at Bahr Al Ghazal distribution points, was reported on 31 separate occasions during the period.

14. The consolidation of the Southern States Coordination Council (SSCC) under the presidency of Riak Machar, the former rebel leader of the South Sudan Independence Army/ Movement (SSIA/M) who signed a peace agreement with the Government in April 1997, was still in process at the end of the reporting period. However, the status of the Relief Association of South Sudan (RASS), the humanitarian wing of the SSIM, remained unclear, making it difficult to coordinate interventions in areas under its control. Relief operations in areas in western Upper Nile under the control of SSIA/M were further hampered by internal fighting and a split within the movement which occurred during the first quarter of 1998.

15. The efforts of Operation Lifeline Sudan to address the humanitarian crisis were boosted by a series of donor contributions in April, May and June 1998 which raised the amount contributed against the 1998 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal from approximately 10 per cent of US$ 109.4 million in March to more than 50 per cent by the end of June. Both the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and WFP increased the amount appealed for as the magnitude of the crisis became clear and operations expanded.

16. Efforts to coordinate the international response to the crisis included a donor consultation in late March 1998 and a meeting in May of the International Advisory Committee (IAC), which serves as the primary policy forum for donor capitals. At the IAC meeting, attention was given to the location and number of beneficiaries, United Nations interventions, restrictions on the operational environment and funding. It was also announced that the Secretary-General's Special Envoy would be resigning in June 1998. That same month, the Secretary-General appointed Ambassador Tom Eric Vraalsen of Norway as his new Special Envoy.

17. The main priority for the Special Envoy was to maintain and expand access, including to rebel-held areas of the Nuba mountains. During a stopover visit by the Secretary-General in mid-May 1998, the Government of the Sudan agreed to allow an assessment mission in rebel-held areas. This breakthrough followed a planned assessment in November 1997 from which the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) had withdrawn. By the end of the reporting period, however, no date had been agreed by the Government for the assessment mission.

18. The Special Envoy also focused his efforts on reducing constraints in the operating environment. Minimum operational standards were introduced with the aim of ensuring programme effectiveness and safety of humanitarian personnel in Operation Lifeline Sudan areas. As a result of these efforts, the Government consistently granted permits for international staff to monitor and supervise interventions, communications equipment was returned in the Government-held towns of Juba and Wau and assurances were received that the United Nations would be allowed to continue its duty-free importation of supplies, including fuel. Despite these improvements, operational bottlenecks persisted. On four occasions during the reporting period, flights into rebel-held areas were turned back by the Government flight tower in Juba, both United Nations agencies and NGOs continued to experience long delays in clearing goods through ports of entry and communications equipment remained in the possession of Government personnel in both Malakal and Bor. Repeated requests by United Nations agencies for new communications equipment for field operations, necessary for ensuring the safety of personnel, continued to be ignored.

19. The operational environment in rebel-held areas was negatively affected by the expulsion by SPLM in September 1997 of Action Contre la Faim (ACF), an NGO member of the southern sector consortium. Attempts to impose taxes on NGOs and the Government's refusal to grant travel permits further constrained humanitarian activities in areas controlled by SPLM. In RASS areas, confiscation of communications equipment and looting of NGO compounds constrained interventions. A draft of a new Memorandum of Understanding, which would have imposed unnecessary restrictions on NGOs, was withdrawn by SPLM after strong objections. At the end of the reporting period, a new draft Memorandum of Understanding, incorporating changes suggested by agencies of Operation Lifeline Sudan, was under consideration.

20. Efforts to highlight the plight of children in war zones were bolstered by the mission to Khartoum and Nairobi of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, in June 1998.

21. Implementation of the 1996 Operation Lifeline Sudan review continued. By April 1998, virtually all of the 41 recommendations endorsed by the United Nations agencies in the autumn of 1996 had been successfully implemented.

Achievements included the introduction in November 1997 of a humanitarian principles programme in Government-held areas at the request of the Special Envoy and the launch in August 1997 of one of the Organization's few integrated assistance and protection programmes for IDPs. Other reforms included the introduction of cost-recovery requirements at the Lokichokio base camp and the standardization of both food and non-food assessment methodologies. At the May 1998 IAC meeting, Operation Lifeline Sudan announced that a final "review of the review" would be conducted shortly and that results would be submitted to donors, thus finalizing the Operation Lifeline Sudan review process.

22. At the end of the reporting period, efforts to broker a ceasefire under the auspices of IGAD Partners Forum were under way. The aim of these efforts was to reinforce the peace process and provide greater access for humanitarian assistance to the areas with the most acute needs. As part of its ongoing efforts to support the peace-building process in the Sudan, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued its round-table programme, convening a third meeting on good governance between senior representatives of the Government of the Sudan and SPLM in October 1997 in Bad Munstereifel, Germany.

III. Emergency operations and Operation Lifeline Sudan

A. General

23. The main priority for agencies working under the umbrella of Operation Lifeline Sudan continued to be the provision of emergency assistance to vulnerable, war-affected populations. During the crisis in southern Sudan, the Operation concentrated on stabilizing the situation by providing a package of emergency survival services to populations in need. The key element of the package was an adequate ration of food supplies. The Operation's agencies recognized that food distributions must be accompanied by, and coordinated with, a range of other emergency services if humanitarian interventions were to be fully effective in reducing prevailing malnutrition rates. It was clear that successful interventions in supplementary and therapeutic feeding, emergency health and water and sanitation as well as the coordinated and timely delivery of seeds and tools and other household food security inputs must all accompany food distributions if the basic survival needs of populations in acute risk were to be met.

24. A combination of access restrictions, insecurity, lack of resources, insufficient capacity and logistical bottlenecks in the first half of 1998 impeded efforts by WFP to deliver sufficient quantities of food during the early stages of crisis to the growing number of at-risk beneficiaries. The same factors hampered other interventions, including supplementary feeding, timely delivery of seeds and tools, emergency health care and the provision of safe water supplies. In order to maximize programme impact despite these constraints, the Operation's agencies coordinated their interventions through emergency response teams (ERTs). The aim of the ERT structure was to ensure that the most vulnerable populations in areas with the most acute needs received assistance first. ERTs were established for each emergency zone and served as the main forum for implementation of the emergency stabilization packages.

25. In the period from August 1997 to June 1998, Operation Lifeline Sudan distributed or pre-positioned approximately 54,554 metric tonnes of food. UNICEF and NGOs delivered over 4,500 metric tonnes of supplies to support activities in the sectors of primary health care, household food security, livestock health, water and sanitation, emergency education, children in especially difficult circumstances, gender and development, capacity-building, humanitarian principles and child rights.

26. As in the past, Operation Lifeline Sudan continued to be coordinated by the United Nations Coordinator of Emergency and Relief Operations in the Sudan (UNCERO) with assistance from the United Nations Humanitarian Coordination Unit (UNHCU) in Khartoum. UNCERO was responsible for the overall direction of Operation Lifeline Sudan, including policy formulation on the key issues of access, humanitarian principles and resource mobilization. On behalf of UNCERO, UNHCU played an increasing role in inter-agency coordination by working with United Nations agencies and NGOs to ensure the timely and effective provision of relief services to beneficiaries in Government areas, in particular to IDPs. UNHCU also served as the field-level secretariat for the Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs to the Sudan.

27. Under the leadership of the Operation Lifeline Sudan Coordinator Southern Sector, UNICEF continued its role as lead agency for the sector with responsibility for coordination in areas served out of Lokichokio. Specific responsibilities included managing the Lokichokio forward staging base, providing security for the 350 Operation personnel working inside southern Sudan and maintaining the air bridge.

B. Political and military developments affecting humanitarian relief efforts

28. Despite intensified fighting in parts of the country, notably Bahr Al Ghazal, western Upper Nile and the eastern border, there appeared to be little change in the strategic balance between the warring parties. Although SPLA is reported to have made some military gains in Blue Nile State, its January–February 1998 offensive against Government-held towns in northern Bahr Al Ghazal, launched after Kerubino Kwanyin Bol rejoined SPLA in January, was repulsed. Approximately 110,000 persons fled Government-held territory, crossing lines into rebel-held zones in the weeks following the attack. Further displacement was caused by raiding and looting between March and June 1998, particularly in Twic County, by the Murahaleen and the Popular Defence Forces (PDF).

29. Throughout the first six months of 1998, there was severe intra-factional fighting in Unity State/western Upper Nile, which had been relatively stable following the signing by SSIM of the peace agreement with the Government of the Sudan in 1997. The most intense fighting occurred in areas south-west of Bentiu, including Nhialdiu, Mankien and Duar. Persistent insecurity and looting forced all NGOs operating in the area to evacuate their staff and shut down programmes for several weeks during March and April 1998. The intra-factional conflict within SSIA/M led to the emergence of a new faction, the South Sudan Unity Movement (SSUM). While not entering into a formal agreement with the new faction, Operation Lifeline Sudan continued to meet humanitarian needs in the areas controlled by SSUM wherever possible.

30. The security and humanitarian situation along the country's eastern border from Kassala to southern Blue Nile also deteriorated sharply. In Kassala, inhabitants from a large number of villages on the Sudanese side of the border were forced to move inland as a result of shelling between opposition and Government forces. Over 20,000 people fled the front-line areas, temporarily settling in 22 sites. In late May 1998, local authorities agreed to relocate the IDPs to four secure sites.

31. Tension between the Reizegat and the Dinka tribes in South Darfur State increased during the reporting period as a result of military operations by PDF and Arab militia forces in northern Bahr Al Ghazal and hostilities between those forces and SPLA. Fearing a repetition of previous incidents, large numbers of IDPs in the area fled their camps and settlements. The 10,000 residents of Abu Matariq and Al Furdos evacuated their camps in early March, seeking safety in Khor Omer camp near Ad Daein and locations in Buram and Nyala provinces.

Security incidents affecting relief personnel

32. A considerable increase occurred in the number and severity of security incidents affecting Operation Lifeline Sudan personnel. In June 1998, three humanitarian workers, two from the WFP and one from the Sudanese Red Crescent Society, were killed by armed gunmen and two Red Crescent workers were injured following a food distribution in a Government village of the Nuba mountains region. From August 1997 to the end of June 1998, more than 200 Operation Lifeline Sudan staff were evacuated or relocated for security reasons from 37 locations in southern Sudan.

33. Three NGO compounds were attacked by armed men, and one attack at Yambio resulted in the fatal shooting of the Sudanese compound manager. Over 20 locations where Operation Lifeline Sudan staff were present were bombed by Antonov aircraft of the Government. Operation vehicles in southern Sudan, northern Kenya and Uganda were ambushed on 10 separate occasions. In the most serious incident, an RASS counterpart was killed when the Norwegian Church Aid vehicle in which he was travelling was ambushed by armed bandits.

34. The presence of landmines in many of the areas served by Operation Lifeline Sudan continued to cause injury to innocent civilians and impede the flow of humanitarian assistance. By the end of June 1998, more than 40 incidents had been reported in the Kassala area. Based on the findings of a 1997 Mine Clearance Policy Unit mission, United Nations agencies included a mine awareness project in the 1998 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for the Sudan. By the end of the reporting period, however, the project had not received donor funding.

C. Access

Flight clearances

35. Although Operation Lifeline Sudan had unprecedented levels of air access throughout most of the reporting period, the two-month flight ban over the entire Bahr Al Ghazal region paralysed its operations in the area and caused a massive deterioration in humanitarian conditions. An average of 164 locations was accessible by air each month, reaching a high of 181 locations in the period from April to June 1998. The number of locations denied each month by the Government fell from an average of 17 locations per

month during the last reporting period to an average of 7 per month.

36. Although six locations were cleared for air deliveries and three road convoys delivered relief supplies to the region during the ban, most of the 110,000 people who had been displaced by the outbreak of hostilities in Wau, Aweil and Gogrial and who were in need of immediate assistance could not be reached. The concentration of relief supplies at only a few locations during the period of the flight ban had the added affect of forcing already weakened populations to travel long distances in search of food.

37. The flight ban had a particularly serious impact on those locations in northern Bahr Al Ghazal which had been consistently denied air access by the Government. Prior to the ban, Ajiep, Akak, Akon, Thiek Thou and Warrap, which are only accessible by air and where approximately 185,000 people were in need of relief assistance, were rejected on a regular basis. Host populations in those areas were in a desperate condition at the time of the exodus. Within weeks after the arrival of the new IDPs, most of these communities were experiencing food deficits.

Barge operations

38. Seven barge convoys made deliveries during the reporting period. This was a significant improvement over the previous reporting period when there were no barge deliveries between September 1996 and July 1997 owing to delays by the Government in issuing of clearances.

Road access

39. In an effort to use the most cost-effective means of transportation, Operation Lifeline Sudan continued to supply approximately 40 per cent of relief assistance by road. Attempts by WFP to pre-position food commodities in Wau were obstructed by military forces in April and May 1998 and were abandoned when rains made the road impassable. WFP was consequently forced to undertake costly airlifts to Wau. The activities of Operation Lifeline Sudan were also constrained by the deterioration of the main road from El Doret to Lokichokio, which was essential for the supply of aviation fuel to the Lokichokio camp.

D. Internally displaced persons

40. As in previous reporting periods, the single most important factor leading to internal displacement continued to be insecurity. The largest number of displaced originated in Bahr Al Ghazal. Following the attack by SPLA in January 1998, approximately 110,000 persons crossed military lines from Government towns seeking safety and services in rebel-held zones. Tens of thousands more were displaced within the rebel zones as people moved in search of food and security. By early June 1998, between 100 and 200 IDPs per day were returning to the Government town of Wau from rebel areas in Bahr Al Ghazal. This number increased to 1,500 per day by the end of June when it was estimated that a total of 20,000 IDPs had returned. Operation Lifeline Sudan agencies predicted that the number of IDPs having returned to Wau would reach 50,000 by the end of July.

41. Three other notable movements of displaced occurred during the reporting period: 6,000 persons fled inter-tribal fighting in Al Geniena on the Chadian border; 20,000 fled IDP camps in Ad Daein following the January 1998 attacks in Bahr Al Ghazal; and a further 20,000 fled villages along the front line on the Eritrean border near Kassala. Although Operation Lifeline Sudan agencies continued to be denied access to rebel-held areas of the Nuba mountains, it was known that displacement from rebel zones to Government villages continued. Although it was expected that large numbers of the displaced currently in Khartoum might return to stable areas of eastern Upper Nile after SSIM had signed the 1997 peace agreement, actual movements during the reporting period were limited.

42. As part of UNHCU's new integrated IDP assistance and protection programme, launched in August 1997 with the deployment of six IDP Coordinators in Government areas, serious efforts were undertaken by the United Nations to work with local authorities to find solutions to the specific problems facing IDP communities. In a major break-through in June 1998, authorities in South Darfur agreed to provide IDPs with secure titles to land. In Kassala, local authorities agreed in May 1998 to relocate new IDPs from their insecure, inadequate camps to secure relocation sites. In Khartoum, United Nations agencies under the leadership of UNHCU worked with local authorities to develop a client-oriented urban planning policy incorporating the needs of populations scheduled for resettlement. In contrast to previous reporting periods, almost no forced demolitions occurred in Khartoum State.

E. Non-governmental organizations

43. During the first half of 1998, NGOs working in southern Sudan secured approximately $50 million of funding for programmes in both the food and non-food sectors. NGOs were active members in all of the emergency response teams and were able to provide financial and

material resources at short notice during the height of the crisis. As the main implementers of Operation Lifeline Sudan programmes, many NGOs were able to quickly redirect their programmes to areas of acute need.

44. In Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector, the ERT structure facilitated the emergency operations of NGOs in areas where access for international NGOs had previously been restricted, including Wau and Unity states. Following recommendations of the Operation Lifeline Sudan review, the Humanitarian Aid Forum (HAF) was established in August 1997 as the principle coordination structure for Government areas. In Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector, four new NGOs were admitted to the consortium. NGOs in the consortium agreed to adhere to the Operation's sector-specific standards and guidelines and to the formation of sectoral quality assurance teams aimed at monitoring programme delivery. The consortium also established a task force to make recommendations on improving information management.

45. Little improvement occurred in the operating environment of international NGOs working in Government areas. Despite United Nations advocacy, international NGOs continued to experience difficulties with entry visas, stay and travel permits, programme approval, importation of goods and licences for radio communication equipment.

46. NGOs working in rebel-held areas faced new restrictions on their operational environment. In September 1997, Action Contre la Faim was expelled by SPLM, which also attempted to impose taxes on NGOs and refused to grant permits. The introduction of a new Memorandum of Understanding which would have imposed unnecessary restrictions on NGOs operating in areas controlled by SPLM was postponed after strong objections from the international community. In RASS areas, confiscation of communications equipment and looting of NGO compounds also constrained NGO interventions.

F. Relief food assistance

47. Following the Operation Lifeline Sudan annual needs assessment in November 1997, WFP advised that food security in southern Sudan was deteriorating and that approximately 2.3 million people affected by war and drought throughout the country would require food assistance in 1998. Of these, it was estimated that 1.4 million were in areas covered by Operation Lifeline Sudan northern sector and 995,000 in areas served by the southern sector. The main reasons for the food shortage were continuous insecurity and a 45 per cent decline in food production owing to drought. It was therefore anticipated that WFP would provide 73,530 metric tonnes of relief food aid to the Sudan in 1998.

48. In the period from January to May 1998, WFP northern sector pre-positioned and distributed 15,200 metric tonnes of food assistance. This ensured that all sufficient food stocks were in place before the start of the rainy season in May, when roads become impassable. WFP northern sector food assistance reached an average of 148,000 beneficiaries each month. In the same period, WFP southern sector delivered 11,433 metric tonnes of food aid to an average of 383,600 beneficiaries each month.

49. In late May 1998, as a result of the worsening humanitarian crisis in southern Sudan, WFP conducted a thorough reassessment of the food security situation in the region. The results showed that the number of people in southern Sudan requiring WFP food aid had risen and that a significant increase in malnutrition rates had occurred among children under five, reaching as high as 40 per cent in Bahr Al Ghazal and 30 per cent in some parts of western Upper Nile. It was estimated that a total of 2.6 million people across the country would require 15,270 metric tonnes of food aid each month in the period from July to October 1998. Of these, 10,270 metric tonnes of food would be required each month for 1.2 million people served by Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector. In the Operation's northern sector, 1.37 million people, including 194,000 beneficiaries in drought-affected North Darfur and Red Sea Hills, would require 5,000 metric tonnes of WFP food assistance each month.

50. In addition to expanding its air operations, WFP continued to explore other, more cost-effective means of delivering food aid. These included a proposal to increase road deliveries from north-west Uganda and Lokichokio by establishing a WFP fleet of trucks and a review of the logistical and cost implications of using a train convoy to make food deliveries along the Wau rail corridor. WFP suspended deliveries by rail in 1994 following widespread looting.

51. WFP also planned an additional four barge convoys for 1998. At the end of June 1998 a barge convoy to Juba was being loaded and was expected to depart Kosti in mid-July. Clearance was still pending for a barge along the Sobat corridor. Additional convoys were being planned along the Tonja-Fanjak and Renk-Malakal corridors.

G. Non-food assistance

52. In the non-food sector, priority was given throughout the reporting period to meeting the acute needs of at-risk populations. During the first half of the reporting period, a major financial shortfall forced UNICEF to cut back certain key programme activities. During the second half of the period, priority was given to meeting emergency needs in the worst-hit areas.

Health

53. Diarrhoeal diseases, malaria and acute respiratory infections, combined with malnutrition, continued to be the major causes of mortality and morbidity. Despite a considerable shortfall in funding for the health programme, an estimated 4.2 million people received basic health services. In its capacity as the lead operational health agency, UNICEF provided essential medical supplies, vaccines and training to health workers. In support of UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO) provided significant support for emergency health programmes, malaria control and polio eradication.

54. Relatively high immunization coverage rates of above 70 per cent for major childhood diseases were maintained in northern Sudan through the UNICEF expanded programme of immunization (EPI). In rebel-held areas, EPI coverage remained low, reflecting the lack of basic health infrastructure. Occasional outbreaks of measles were nonetheless controlled through mass immunization campaigns. Beginning in January 1998, National Immunization Days (NIDs) for the eradication of polio were held throughout the country including, for the first time, rebel-held areas. Despite logistical constraints and access restrictions caused by the two-month flight suspension over Bahr Al Ghazal, NIDs were successful in reaching 4.9 million and 5.1 million children under five in the first and second rounds, respectively. This activity, which was not covered in the 1998 Appeal, cost approximately $2.7 million and was supported technically and financially by WHO and the Centers for Disease Control. UNICEF-Khartoum also vaccinated more than 5,000 children as part of its barge outreach programme.

55. Completion rates of tuberculosis treatment dropped from 75 per cent in 1997 to 55 per cent in 1998, while default rates rose to more than 40 per cent over the previous reporting period. This trend caused considerable concern among humanitarian agencies since tuberculosis is the leading cause of adult deaths in southern Sudan. The Sudan continued to account for more than half the world's cases of guinea worm disease (dracunculiasis). In 1998, the number of cases of reported guinea worm disease decreased by 34 per cent over 1997. Agencies attributed this, however, to under-reporting rather than the absence of major progress in preventing the disease. The programme for the treatment and prevention of sleeping sickness, a potentially fatal disease if untreated, continued to be implemented by NGOs in the Tambura area of Equatoria. More than 8,000 people were screened and 700 treated for the disease. Humanitarian agencies expect that the disease is likely to spread to other populations owing to limited access to medical facilities, the prohibitively high cost of treatment and the high prevalence of the disease.

Household food security

56. UNICEF continued to provide agricultural, fisheries and livestock inputs to strengthen the food security of displaced and war-effected populations. Across Operation Lifeline Sudan target areas, 1,900 metric tonnes of seeds were supplied to approximately 250,000 households. The Operation's southern sector programme was considerably enhanced by the work of NGOs which contributed seeds, tools, transport and human resources, while from Khartoum, UNICEF took steps to strengthen technical coordination with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Despite these efforts, Operation Lifeline Sudan was able to meet barely 50 per cent of assessed needs in areas served by the southern sector, so great was the decline in levels of food security. In areas served by the northern sector, insecurity in the first quarter of 1998 impeded the distribution of seeds and tools in Bahr Al Ghazal. In Upper Nile, inadequate funding resulted in only slightly over 50 per cent of the needs being met despite increased access to populations in that area.

57. Control of rinderpest, which devastates the cattle on which many Sudanese depend for their food security, continued to be an important component of the programme. During the reporting period, approximately 1.25 million cattle were vaccinated against rinderpest and over 900 community-based animal health workers, including vaccinators, were supported with training, supervision and equipment. The programme, which is coordinated by the Pan-African Rinderpest Campaign (PARC) and UNICEF, also draws on the expertise and resources of NGOs. In early 1998, an outbreak of rinderpest in Torit County was successfully controlled in a combined effort involving UNICEF, NGOs and counterparts.

Nutrition

58. The nutritional status of women and children continued to be of major concern during the reporting period, with child malnutrition in some areas reaching levels unprecedented in the history of Operation Lifeline Sudan. In areas of Bahr Al Ghazal, global malnutrition rates for children under five were as high as 62 per cent and in excess of 30 per cent in some areas of Unity State/Upper Nile.

59. UNICEF's nutrition programme covered 75 per cent of the accessible population in Government areas of Operation Lifeline Sudan, providing supplementary feeding supplies and other equipment to 72 feeding centres. Support includes provision of UNIMIX to 54 feeding centres in the South and the transitional zone, which benefited approximately 63,000 women and children. In rebel-held areas of southern Sudan, UNICEF and Operation Lifeline Sudan NGOs supported supplementary and therapeutic feeding centres at approximately 13 locations in Bahr Al Ghazal and 8 locations in western Upper Nile. The crisis in Bahr Al Ghazal posed the greatest challenge, with some 45,000 children below five years of age and a similar number of pregnant and lactating women requiring supplementary or therapeutic feeding.

Water and sanitation

60. Throughout areas served by Operation Lifeline Sudan, over 1,800 community handpumps were drilled, installed or rehabilitated, while over 40 courses were held to train community members in basic maintenance. UNICEF coordinated the work of 19 NGOs in the Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector water and sanitation team, which played a major role in ensuring adequate supplies of clean water for feeding centres in the critical emergency zones of Bahr Al Ghazal and western Upper Nile. UNICEF also undertook a major project to rehabilitate and upgrade the Malakal Town water supply. The project commenced in January 1998 and will benefit 100,000 people living in and around Malakal Town. Efforts to promote hygiene awareness and safe sanitation include the construction of more than 3,000 household and school latrines as well as community training in hygiene and sanitation.

Emergency education

61. During the reporting period, more than 3,250 teachers and school administrators were trained in Operation Lifeline Sudan southern sector and 5,200 school teachers in the northern sector. Efforts to increase the number of women teachers included English language training for 880 female teachers. Efforts to promote quality basic education among the displaced children in the transitional zone focused on training in "Theatre for Life" for 80 master trainers from different displaced schools. This unique training programme covered topics such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child, peace and tolerance, life skills and gender sensitization.

62. In the Operation's southern sector, UNICEF provided over 1,000 basic education kits, each one sufficient for 200 children for one year, and 1,450 assistance kits for teachers. In the northern sector, 87,000 children benefited from UNICEF-provided educational materials. In addition, more than 80 classrooms serving 4,000 children were constructed or rehabilitated in South Kordofan, South Darfur, Blue Nile and Upper Nile.

Children in especially difficult circumstances

63. UNICEF, working in partnership with child-focused NGOs, including Radda Barnen and Save the Children Fund-UK, reunited approximately 300 children with their families. A further 103 young adults participated in basic teacher training before being reunified with their families in Bor and Bahr Al Ghazal. More than 200 unaccompanied minors were given assistance through community groups during the crisis in Bahr Al Ghazal. UNICEF also supported 45 psychosocial community supervisors, providing both training and equipment. During the first part of 1998, UNICEF-Khartoum took the lead in identifying, protecting and transporting 20 Ugandan children who had been abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army. The children had sought safety in UNICEF's Juba compound before being sent under UNICEF protection to Khartoum. The children were repatriated to Uganda under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

64. During the earlier part of 1998, 40 child soldiers in SPLM areas and 75 in RASS areas were registered and interviewed as part of UNICEF-Nairobi's new demobilization of child soldiers programme coordinated with the full cooperation of both movements. After registration, the child soldiers were transferred to transit camps, given orientation and reunified with their families.

Humanitarian principles

65. UNICEF-Nairobi conducted six workshops for NGO personnel in Nairobi and Lokichokio on the basic humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, accountability and transparency. In addition, 12 dissemination workshops were conducted inside the Sudan, reaching approximately 1,200 participants including chiefs and other traditional leaders, representatives from civil

society, counterparts and the general public. As part of a ground-breaking new programme, UNICEF-Nairobi began direct training for rebel officers in basic human rights, with particular emphasis on the rights of children and other civilians in armed conflict. By the end of the reporting period, 76 senior SPLA commanders had received training.

H. Assistance to refugees

66. At the end of June 1998, 338,951 refugees, mainly from Ethiopia and Eritrea, with smaller numbers from Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Uganda, were under the protection of UNHCR in Sudan. Of these, a total of 160,291 in 26 camps in eastern Sudan were receiving food and other assistance. The remainder were living as urban refugees in various parts of the country.

67. During the reporting period, UNHCR successfully implemented the final stage of its voluntary repatriation programme for Ethiopian refugees which had begun in 1993. A total of 15,294 individuals out of the 50,000 Ethiopian refugees remaining in the Sudan were voluntarily repatriated. Plans were made for status determination screening exercises for refugees who chose not to return to Ethiopia.

68. In March 1998, in response to a request from the Eritrean Government, UNHCR and the Commissioner for Refugees in Sudan carried out a data collection exercise to establish the number of Eritrean refugees who wished to repatriate. The results showed that 150,660 out of a total of 300,000 refugees were willing to return to Eritrea. By the end of the reporting period, however, the Eritrean authorities had not yet agreed that the repatriated programme, suspended in 1995, could resume.

69. In September 1997, UNHCR fielded a protection and repatriation mission for 1,626 refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo who were residing in Juba. A further 38 Congolese refugees in Khartoum were registered for possible voluntary repatriation. Agreement from the Congolese authorities for the repatriation programme was pending at the end of the reporting period.

70. Other assistance provided by UNHCR included repatriation of 80 refugees under special repatriation programmes and facilitation of third-country resettlement for 277 refugees. UNHCR also assisted in the return of 101 Sudanese refugees to the Sudan from Kenya.

IV. Action taken by Member States

71. In addition to the activities described above, several Member States have provided information on action taken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/169 F.

72. The Government of Australia has provided a total of $6.028 million, including $2.68 to the World Food Programme for displaced and drought victims and emergency famine relief; $3.208 million to four Australian NGOs for emergency seed distribution, emergency basic education and four primary health care projects; and $140,000 to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for IDP monitors.

73. For 1998, the Government of Belgium has made the following contributions to humanitarian programmes in the Sudan: support for the WFP emergency food assistance project on the balance of funding made available in 1993 in support of food assistance to the Sudan; continuation of the "Rehabilitation of Qala in Naha" project financed for 56,500,000 Belgian francs for the period 1987–1998 and implemented by the NGO agreement; contribution to aid provided through the European Union in the form of BF 11,800,000 allocated through ECHO for the period from April 1998 to March 1999.

74. The Government of China has through bilateral channels provided construction machinery for water conservation including spare parts and support for installation, trial run and training; equipment for household production including pulp separators, medium-sized tractors, tillage machines, complete sets of farm machines, clothes-making equipment, grain-processing equipment plus support costs for training and their installation and trial run.

75. The Government of Cyprus has provided a contribution of $5,000.

76. The Government of Denmark has contributed 21.2 million kroner ($3,110,000) as follows: Dkr 7 million to Save the Children (DK/US) for emergency kits; Dkr 2 million to DanChurch Aid for food and seeds; Dkr 1 million to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies for food and health activities; Dkr 1.1 million to the Adventist Development and Relief Agency for distribution of protein biscuits; and Dkr 10 million to the World Food Programme for food aid.

77. Humanitarian and relief assistance for the Sudan from the Government of Finland in 1997 was contributed in the amount of 4.5 million markkaa.

78. In 1997–1998, the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has provided assistance to the Sudan totalling

DM 3.7 million for support for: water supply, shelter materials and medical supplies to the German Red Cross for relief to internally displaced persons and flood victims; support through Aktion Afrika Hilfe (AAH) to the Maridi hospital and the training of medical personnel in southern Sudan; food-for-work in southern Sudan through German Agro Action; relief through World Vision International for internally displaced in Bahr Al Ghazal; feeding centres through Care International for internally displaced persons in Unity State; food provided through Caritas for internally displaced persons in Bahr Al Ghazal; WFP air transport of food for southern Sudan; and the ICRC emergency programme.

79. The Government of Ireland provided a total of £Ir 1,804,675, including specific contributions to UNICEF (£Ir 300,000), the World Food Programme (£Ir 650,000) and NGOs (£Ir 754,675).

80. For the current year, the Government of Italy has contributed 4 billion lire to implement humanitarian programmes in the Sudan, as follows: Lit 2 billion in food aid to benefit northern Sudan, plus Lit 400 million for a project to aid the southern population from the Kajo Keji region; the remaining Lit 1.6 billion have been allocated to Operation Lifeline Sudan for humanitarian assistance for the southern populations. In addition to this sum, a further contribution of Lit 1 billion to UNICEF has been planned in support of Operation Lifeline Sudan through the channel of regular programmes.

81. Emergency assistance to the Sudan in 1998 from Luxemburg totals 5 million Luxemburg francs contributed to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

82. The Government of Norway has announced that in 1998 contributions to the Sudan will total 85 million kroner. Of this, Nkr 50.9 million has been confirmed as of late June 1998, including assistance to: Adventist Development and Relief Agency (drinking water project); Christina Michelson Institute (peace negotiators, IGAD); Médecins sans Frontières-Oslo (health care, training and water assistance; primary health care); Norwegian Church Aid (food and non-food sector interventions in the fields of emergency food aid; health and nutritional care; rehabilitation of health clinics; education for IDPs, children and teachers in southern Sudan; food-for-work for IDP returnees; rehabilitation of road network; food/basic relief to IDP camps; voluntary repatriation programmes; peace and reconciliation; scholarships for southern Sudanese refugees in Kenya and Uganda; food and other emergency relief aid in Barh Al Ghazal); and UNICEF (aircraft operations).

83. During the period from June 1995 to June 1998, the Government of Sweden provided emergency assistance to the Sudan, *inter alia*, in the following areas: protection and humanitarian assistance; water, sanitation and health care; transport support; refugee care; education; repatriation; seeds and tools. The assistance in these areas during that period amounted to Skr 139 million (from January to June 1998: Skr 62 million). Main implementing partners have been UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP and ICRC.

84. Contributions from the Government of Switzerland in 1997 and the first half of 1998 totalled SwF 7,973,750 and relate to financial contributions to international and non-governmental organizations, the provision of food aid as well as support provided through the Swiss Disaster Relief Corps.

V. Concluding observations

85. At the end of the reporting period, prospects for an early end to the current crisis in southern Sudan remained limited. Populations in Bahr Al Ghazal continued to move into Government areas in search of food. Agencies predicted that in the short term more people would continue to cross the threshold from coping to starvation, necessitating adjustments in the number of people in need and the amount of relief required.

86. Projections indicated that the 1998 grain harvest will be poor: at the end of the reporting period, rains were already late and erratic and the area under cultivation had been reduced as a result of continuous displacement and lack of sufficient seeds. As a result, substantial amounts of international relief food aid are likely to be required until October 1999.

87. It was clear that funding support for the relief operation would be critical to the success of the coordinated effort by Operation Lifeline Sudan to stabilize the humanitarian situation and lower prevailing rates of malnutrition. The agencies also agreed that maintaining and expanding access to populations in need, including those in rebel-held areas of the Nuba mountains, would remain a top priority. The agencies recognized that a ceasefire would significantly improve the humanitarian situation in southern Sudan and allow humanitarian organizations to stabilize the current crisis more effectively.

88. Operation Lifeline Sudan agencies agreed that the security of relief personnel would remain of paramount concern in the aftermath of the June 1998 killings in the Government area of the Nuba mountains. It was agreed that

the United Nations would continue to insist that minimum operational standards be adhered to by the warring parties, including use of appropriate communications equipment, if humanitarian operations in conflict zones were to be maintained.

89. While appreciation for the overall progress achieved by Operation Lifeline Sudan is justified, there is no reason to be satisfied. Overall, the humanitarian situation is increasingly serious and many innocent victims continue to die. It remains to be seen whether early next year there will not be a repetition of the same drama as that which emerged in Bahr Al Ghazal. Operation Lifeline Sudan, the parties to the conflict and donor Governments must together ensure that the current high levels of humanitarian access are not subject yet again to renewed constraints imposed by the parties to the conflict.